

Senator Harry Reid
Democratic Radio Address
December 13, 2003

Good morning. I'm Senator Harry Reid of Nevada.

The holiday season is a wonderful time.

It's a time to exchange gifts ... a time to celebrate with family and friends ... a time to observe our various faiths.

It's also a time to reflect on the successes and failures of the year just past, and the opportunities that lie ahead.

We accomplished some important things this year.

Thanks to the skill and bravery of American troops, Saddam Hussein was removed from power.

Congress passed a bipartisan bill that will protect American forests from the kind of wildfires that ravaged California this year.

And just last week the Supreme Court upheld the bipartisan campaign finance reform bill that will help take the special interests out of our government.

As Democrats we worked together with Republicans to accomplish these things. And we will continue to work with them.

But when we believed that Republicans were trying to steer the country in the wrong direction, we offered another choice.

In the Senate, we stopped an energy bill that would have been an early Christmas present to big oil companies ... and a lump of coal for consumers and the environment.

Instead of reducing our dependence on foreign oil, this bill would have let polluters off the hook for the mess they made. It was a bad bill, and I'm proud that we stopped it.

When the Administration tried to take away overtime pay for millions of workers, Democrats fought back and voted to kill the Administration plan.

And when the President wanted a blank check to rebuild Iraq, we tried to save taxpayers \$10 billion by making part of the money a loan.

Since taking stock means recognizing the good and the bad, I have to say there were some areas where Congress could have done better.

We could have passed a Medicare bill that allowed the government to negotiate for lower prices for prescription drugs... but the Republicans sided with the big drug companies and blocked us.

In fact, the bill they passed will actually force millions of seniors to spend more on prescriptions than they already do, and it will force many more into HMOs where they would lose the ability to choose their own doctor.

We could have given a tax break to every working family with children, but Republicans excluded many of the most deserving families, including thousands of military families.

We could have extended unemployment benefits for people who lost their jobs, and haven't yet found work... but the Republicans refused.

Sometimes Americans wonder whether it really matters who's in charge. These examples and many others prove that it really does.

That's why we Democrats will continue to offer choices on important issues that affect families in Nevada and every other state.

We'll work to cut the cost of prescription drugs by revamping the law President Bush just signed, which blocks Medicare from negotiating for lower prices. We also need to let senior citizens purchase medicine from Canada where it's less expensive.

We'll fight to protect the right of senior citizens to choose their doctors under Medicare – because if you can choose who cuts your hair or works on your car, you ought to be able to choose your doctor.

Democrats will protect Social Security by demanding fiscal responsibility – instead of adding to a deficit that's growing like a sinkhole, threatening to swallow us all.

We'll work to create millions of jobs by building roads, bridges and other needed projects – instead of just waiting for the three million jobs lost under this Administration to magically reappear.

We'll be vigilant in guarding the privacy and civil liberties of Americans – instead of sacrificing freedom in the name of protecting it.

And we'll push to enlist NATO and the rest of our allies in the effort to rebuild Iraq – instead of leaving American soldiers to do a dangerous job alone.

When we agree with our Republican colleagues about what's best for our country, we'll work with them.

But when we think they're wrong about important issues, we'll offer alternatives.

We'll do it because people deserve a choice.

And because in America, it's never wrong to stand up for what you believe, even if you are outvoted. In fact, I believe the voice of dissent is often the true voice of democracy.

I have to say, I'm troubled by the way this Administration brands Americans who disagree with its policies as "unpatriotic." There are many areas where we do not agree with members of this Administration, but we would never question their patriotism. They owe us the same in return.

As we approach the holidays, there's one subject on which we all agree.

Our thoughts and prayers are with the members of our Armed Forces who are serving in Iraq, Afghanistan and elsewhere. Thanks to their vigilance we are free to celebrate this special season. I know that one National Guard unit that just returned to Nevada received 10 Purple Hearts and 48 Bronze Stars for their bravery.

Once again, I'm Senator Harry Reid of Nevada. Thank you for listening, and best wishes to you and your family.

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